

# Mfecane

And its effects on Bantu Societies

# Factors Leading to Mfecane

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- Rapid population growth
- Limited population movement
  - Introduction of corn
  - Short supply of land
- Drought and famine
  - Dependence on corn
  - Competition for available resources

# John Omer-Cooper

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- Coined the term Mfecane in *The Zulu Aftermath* in 1966.
- Mfecane= Zulu word for “The Crushing.”
- Accepted idea was that the radical political and social changes among the Bantu societies were caused by the expansion of the Zulu kingdom under Shaka Zulu.
- Mfecane was unquestioned fact of southern Africa until the 1980’s.

# Julian Cobbing

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- Argued that the wars and migrations were the result of the expansion of European colonial settlement and trade in southern Africa.
- Further argued that the accepted idea of Mfecane was a deliberate falsification by Europeans to blame the violence and disorder on the African people in an effort to avoid accountability for the impact of the slave trade and justify taking African land.

# Elizabeth Eldredge

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- Argued that violence resulted from increasing inequalities within and between societies and from various environmental crises.
- White African defenders of apartheid blame Zulu in order to characterize Africans as divisive and militaristic.
- This justifies and defends the need for white rule in South Africa.

# John B. Wright

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- Political changes began half a century before the Zulu kingdom emerged.
- The region experienced upheaval but was not completely devastated or depopulated by the Zulu or anyone else.
- The Zulu kingdom under Shaka did not have the military or political capacity to directly rule south of Thukela.
- The Zulu alone was not the only agent to bring about the changes in the 1820's.

# Origin of the Zulu People

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- The AmaZulu (“People of Heaven”) are direct descendents of the patriarch Zulu.
- Zulu was the Nguni chief in the Congo Basin area.
- Pastoralists, but also raised cattle.
- Political system based on chief and council of elders.
- Worshipped the creator god Nkulunkulu.

# Rise of Shaka

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- Young skillful warrior; youngest of three brothers.
- Warrior for Dingiswayo army
- Became leader of Zulu clan after death of his father, Senzangakona, in 1816.
- Made changes in the military.

# Military Changes

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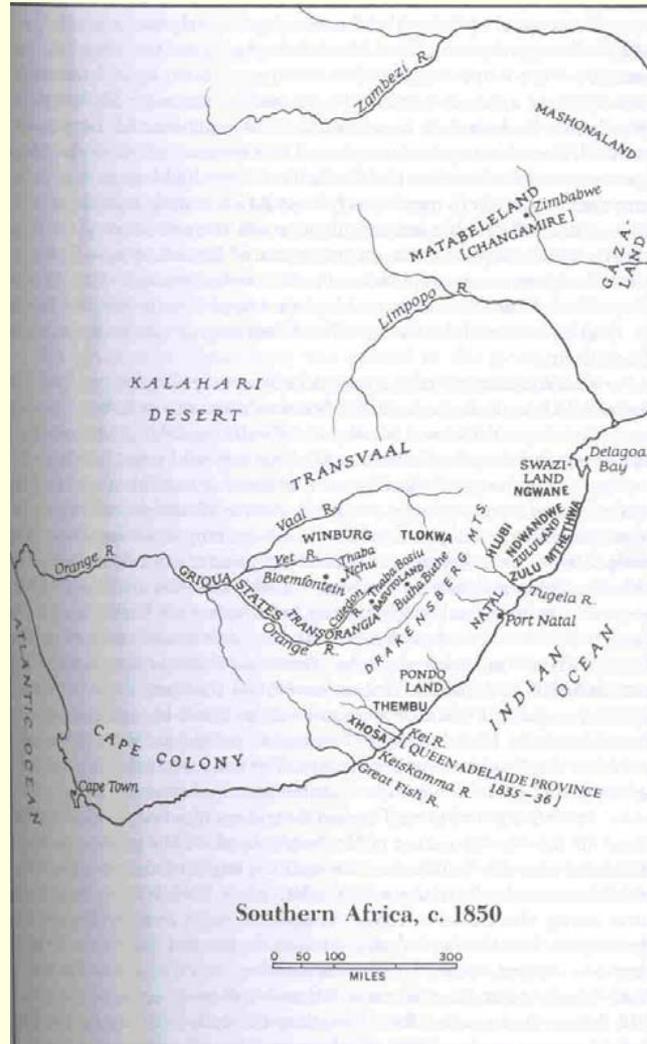
- Put young men into Age-based regiments.
- All young men must have military training.
- Trained to use the throwing spear and a short stabbing spear (same weapons used to fight the British in 1879).
- Created military formation known as “The Horn.”
- Military men were not allowed to have sex or marry while serving.

# Expansion

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- By mid 1820's, Shaka extended the Zulu nation.
- Extended north to the borders of present day Mozambique.
- Extended west across the Drakensberg Mountains
- Extended south to the margins of the area that would become the Transkei homeland.

# Map



# Expansion

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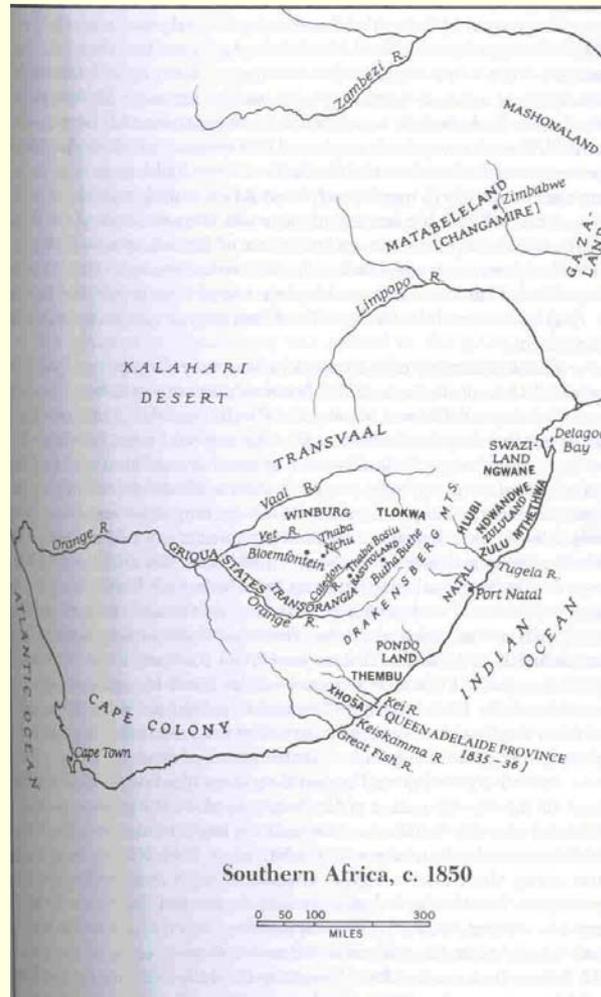
- Staffed military leaders in other regions to make sure people were compliant with his laws.
- Forced other chiefs to pay tribute.
- Kingdom exceeded 100,000 people and a standing army of 40,000 men.
- Shaka was assassinated in 1828 by his brother.

# History of the Ndebele

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- Originated in 1823 by Mzilikazi, a general under Shaka Zulu.
  - Refused to give cattle to Shaka.
  - He had many Zulu followers.
- Came from Natal Province, but moved north with Mzilikazi, across the Drakensburg.
- Many of the Ndebele were great warriors
- Raided as far south as the Orange River.

# Map



Southern Africa, c. 1850

# The Ndebele

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- Lived in what is now modern day Pretoria for about 10 years.
  - Was originally heavily populated, but Ndebele caused people to flee and the Ndebele seized their cattle.
- The growing state lacked stability.
  - Ndebele were attacked by Griqua, the Khoikhoi, and later the Zulu.
- In 1836, they came into conflict with Boer trekkers.
  - The Ndebele started the conflict, but they lost to the Boers.

# The Ndebele

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- Again, the Ndebele moved.
  - They moved to what would become their permanent home, Matabeleland.
- In Matabeleland, the Ndebele became a strong force.
  - Regional governors were military leaders.
  - Class system emerged which gave rank to the descendants of the original Ndebele.

# The Ndebele

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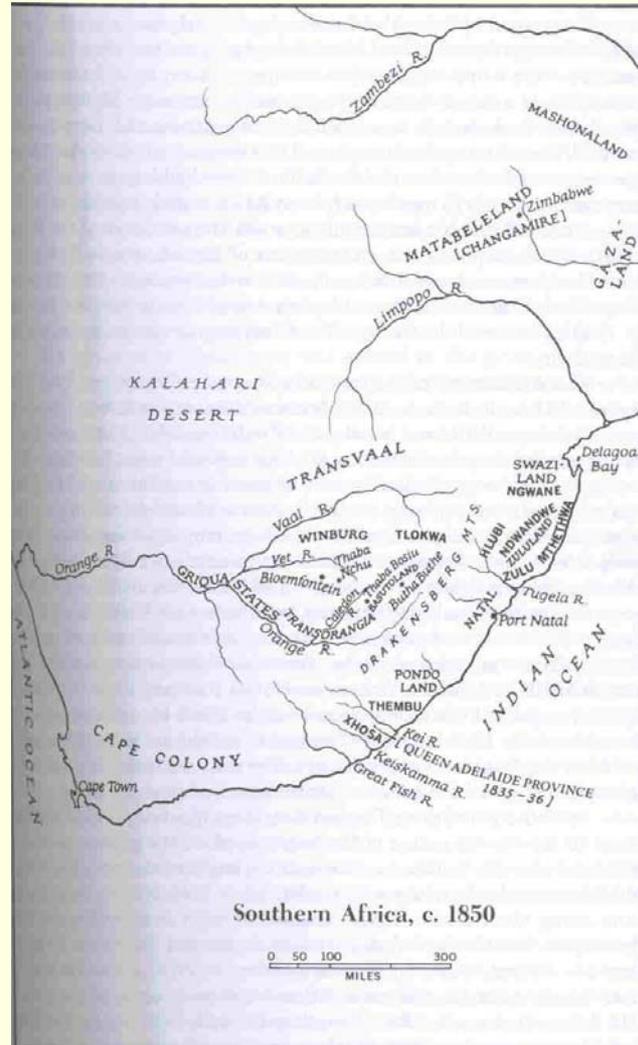
- Mzilikazi died in 1868.
  - Dispute over his successor.
  - Eventually went to Lobengula, his son.
- Lobengula allowed the British to take control.
  - The British South Africa Company secured the mineral concession for all of Matabeleland in 1888.
  - Ndebele tried to revolt against the British.
  - Lobengula was defeated and the Ndebele abandoned war and became herders and farmers in 1896 .

# Sotho People

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- Founded in 1815-1829 by Moshoeshoe.
  - Name given to him in 1809 for his skills in cattle thievery.
- Pressure from the Boers, British, and the Zulu caused the Sotho to move north into mountains near Butha-Buthe.
  - Moshoeshoe was the only one able to unite the individual Bantu people into one Sotho tribe.

# Map



Southern Africa, c. 1850

0 50 100 300  
MILES

# Sotho People

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- Moved from Butha-Buthe to Thaba Boisu.
  - Safer place to live.
  - Only seven ways to get up the mountain.
  - Had natural springs to support the population.
  - Survived many attacks from the Griquas, Boers, and the British.
  - Mountain is about 20 miles from Maseru.

# Sotho Diplomacy

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- In 1840, Moshoeshoe enlisted the help of the British to help protect them from the Boers.
  - Led to attack by the British.
- Fought wars with Boers in 1858 and 1865.
  - First war was won by the Sotho.
  - Second war the Sotho lost.
    - Lost most of the western lowlands.

# Sotho Diplomacy

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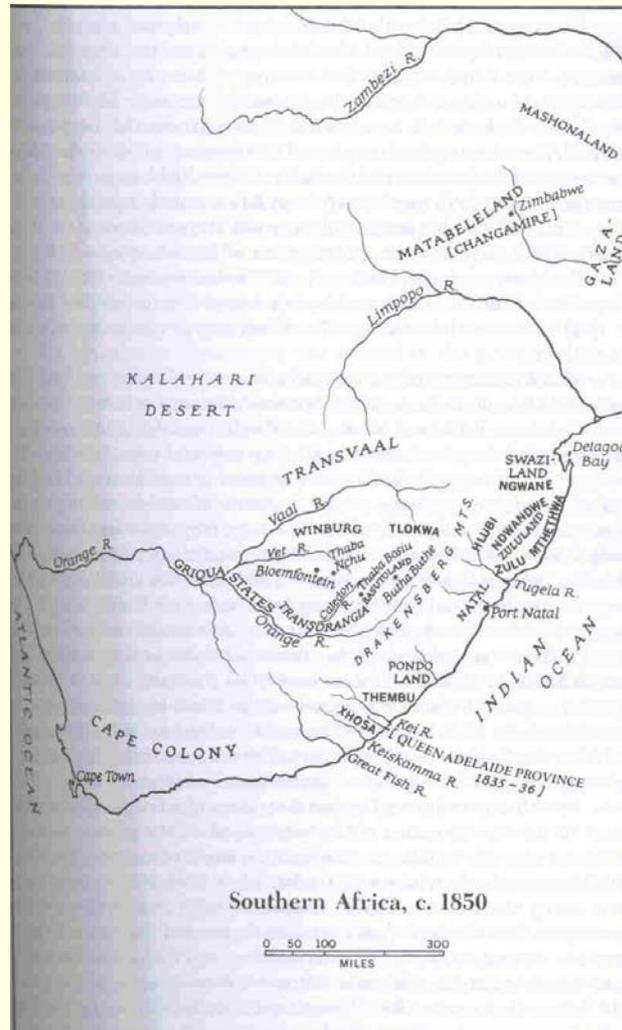
- In 1868, Sotho becomes a British protectorate to protect them from the Boers.
  - Sotho became part of the Cape Colony in 1871.
- Moshoeshoe died in 1870.
- Sotho become their own state in 1966.

# Background of the Boers

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- Boers are European settlers in southern Africa.
- British gained dominance in southern Africa causing the fall of independent Boer states.
- Boers were forced to move north.
- Boers, under Cape Colony administration, became disgruntled at having to pay taxes to British.

# Map



# Exploitation of the Mfecane by the Boers

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- Boer expansion created conflict with the Griquas and the Bacas.
- Griquas were mixed peoples.
- Griquas, in 1823, defeat the Mantati horde, making them a dominant force around Phillipolis.
- British make Griquas allies against the Boers and bushmen.

# Exploitation of Mfecane by the Boers

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- Griquas exploit the power given to them by the British and displace bushmen and sell their land to the Boers.
- Boer-Griqua peace is disrupted in a need for land and cattle.
- In 1845, they commence to raiding each other for cattle.

# Exploitation of Mfecane by the Boers

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- Bacas were kicked out of their land in 1823 by the Zulu.
- They migrated to Pondoland.
- Bacas become biggest group next to the Pondos in Pondoland.
- Boers start to migrate to Pondoland in the 1830's.
- Boers come into conflict with Bacas due to their land holdings.

# Exploitation of Mfecane by the Boers

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- The Bacas are accused of stealing Boer cattle.
- Boers and Bacas fight over the cattle stealing.
- Boers displace and steal the Bacas' livestock.
- Bacas leave and Boers take over the territory.